



## Raleigh's Vision for 2030

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Raleigh is an emerging 21st century city supported by innovation, education and creativity and an outstanding standard of living. Raleigh is a city on the rise and aspires to set itself apart from other cities as a model for economic competitiveness, quality of life, sustainability and environmental stewardship.

### Why Develop a City Vision?

Raleigh will face challenging trends and significant opportunities in the coming years. A vision for Raleigh plays a central role in the development of Planning Raleigh 2030, the update of Raleigh's Comprehensive Plan. Visioning can help to develop a common understanding of where we are today and where and how we want to grow and develop in the future. A vision also provides a framework for the development and organization of the updated Comprehensive Plan and gives city leaders direction on where the community wants to be in the future.

The primary purpose of Raleigh's Vision for 2030 is for the community to identify Raleigh's biggest challenges, understand how choices we make might affect our future, and how we balance these pressures in the face of change.

In short, this Vision for Raleigh is:

- a way of including a broad constituency in a discussion about where Raleigh is headed and where it should be headed;
- based on a summary of major issues and challenges facing the city; and
- a framework for organizing and guiding the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

The forecasted trends predict that Raleigh will grow by more than 200,000 people by 2030. The Triangle region as a whole is expected to gain more than 700,000 people, almost doubling in population. These people will likely be more diverse than those who are here today, as Raleigh attracts people from all over the country and the world to join its growing economy of high tech and service jobs. Global issues like rising energy prices and climate change will also impact our region. These and other changes can be identified and managed by development of a Vision for Raleigh and the update and implementation of a new Comprehensive Plan for Raleigh.

### Raleigh's Planning and Development History

**Plan for A Capital City:** In 1792, the General Assembly purchased 1,000 acres for the establishment of a capital city for North Carolina. William Christmas, a legislator, designed a plan and survey for the new town, which was established on 400 of the original 1,000 acre purchase. His plan was a simple grid that divided the city into four quadrants or wards. Nash, Moore, Caswell and Burke squares were located centrally in each ward. The Capitol was located in Union Square, the central square of the five-square plan.

**1913 Plan:** In 1913, more than 100 years later, Raleigh developed its first modern city plan for the growing municipality. Charles Mulford Robinson developed the plan and focused his recommendations on city beautification including eliminating overhead wires, sign control, street lighting, and a system of

green parks. During the first fifty years of the 20th Century, Raleigh grew as streetcar lines were extended out Hillsborough Street and Glenwood Avenue. New “suburbs” such as Cameron Park and Glenwood/Brooklyn were constructed along these lines, which permitted the city to grow beyond a size limited by walking. Even so Raleigh remained relatively small, with a compact residential character complemented by State government offices and institutions.

By the mid 20th Century, however, rising incomes, low-cost fuels and the increased affordability of automobiles enabled a dramatic increase in distances between homes, shops, and offices. In fact, after 1950, the City’s population density dropped dramatically, and has remained low as the City has grown outward in a low density pattern of development.

**1979 Comprehensive Plan:** The next plan for Raleigh was completed in 1979. It called for nodal development with much of the new development to be guided to “Metro Focus” areas located along major corridors, and Community and Neighborhood nodes connected by various corridors.

**1989 Comprehensive Plan:** The most recent citywide plan was adopted in 1989, and has been amended every year since its adoption. It continued the planning framework of nodal development with the inclusion of an Urban Form Map that identified a typology of centers, corridors, and focus areas. That plan is now almost 20 years old, with much having changed in that time.

Since 1980, the City’s population has more than doubled from approximately 150,000 to approximately 370,000. During the same period, the City’s land area has almost tripled in size from approximately 55 to 140 square miles. Clearly, the City’s land area is growing to accommodate Raleigh’s expanding population and job base.

**Planning Raleigh 2030:** In 2007, the City decided it was time to review and update the Comprehensive Plan to better address the issues and challenges the city faces today and tomorrow, such as incorporating green and sustainable principles, addressing transit and transportation, managing growth, the coordination of land use and infrastructure, affordable housing, the development of new communities, the conservation of existing neighborhoods, and the renaissance of downtown. Planning Raleigh 2030 is underway and it is anticipated that a new plan will be adopted by early 2009.

## Anticipating Change—An Overview of Trends and Issues

Raleigh is a fast-growing city located in the second-fastest growing county in North Carolina, which in turn is part of the Research Triangle Region, the fastest-growing region in the State. While growth is not new to Raleigh, the magnitude of the growth and its implications on the City’s infrastructure and quality of life do represent new challenges. Below are some highlights of the issues and challenges facing Raleigh today related to the physical growth and development of the city.

### Educational Attainment and Income

Raleigh has a national reputation for its highly educated workforce, as well as the region’s exceptional universities. In 2006, the percentage of Raleigh residents with Bachelor’s degree or higher was 45 percent. The City’s rate is much higher than the state’s rate of 25 percent and more than two and a half times greater than the national rate of 17 percent. High school achievement is also higher than either the state or nation. The challenge will be to foster job training and technical skills for those without college degrees.

Raleigh is unusually rich in higher educational resources and these are key to economic development,

innovation, and prosperity. The Raleigh area is home to six universities and colleges, including North Carolina State University, a major research center, a law school, two private women's colleges and two historically significant schools that were originally founded as institutions of higher learning for African Americans.

Higher educational levels typically translate into higher salaries. In 2006, the City's median household income of \$51,000 was much higher than the state level of \$42,000 and slightly higher than the national level of \$48,000. However, the percentage of individuals below the poverty level was over 13 percent in the City, about the same as it is for the state and the nation. The City and County will need to continue to focus on quality education for youth and life-long learning opportunities to help those who need to move out of poverty. Affordable housing is also significant issue for lower income residents, especially since a car is often needed to find housing or employment.

### **Expanding Housing Choices**

Single family homes make up nearly 50 percent of the City's housing units, while multifamily homes (including town homes) make up about 40 percent. This means that the City already has a very healthy mix of housing types that can meet the needs of Raleigh's current and future population. However, market pressures are driving up housing costs. Low income households have great difficulty finding affordable and decent housing options, and many middle income households also feel these pressures. Affordable housing provides stability for families, improves opportunities for education and career advancement, and reduces the risk of homelessness for households that are dependent on low wages or fixed incomes. Affordable housing should be incorporated throughout the city and be transit accessible. Affordable housing and workforce housing are key challenges that need to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Shaping our Residential Communities**

The City's housing market has been strong. Since 2002, total permit activity has ranged from just under 5,000 to nearly 6,500 per year, with a five-year average of approximately 5,700 units per year. A range of housing is being built. The Comprehensive Plan can help guide how housing is developed in the future, and how new communities can be developed that are served by distinctive, mixed-use business districts and accessible by auto, transit, biking and walking.

### **Developable Land Area**

Based on its outward growth and annexation policies, Raleigh currently contains about 90,000 acres, and may annex a maximum of 43,000 acres in the future. Since 1990, the City has annexed about 1,900 acres per year. At this rate, the City has about 22 years of annexation growth potential, but "greenfield" development is only part of the story. Eighteen percent of the land area in the City's planning jurisdiction is currently vacant, and available for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. The Comprehensive Plan will need to provide guidance on both new development at the City's edges as well as fill-in development that can enhance and support existing residents and businesses.

### **Fostering Office Development within Mixed Use Developments**

Raleigh also has a strong office market due to the region's educated workforce and skilled technology workers. Over the last four years alone, annual office development has more than tripled in construction value from \$40 million to \$125 million. One challenge for the future will be to foster mixed-use office environments that are more accessible to where people live, reducing travel times, and saving energy.

## **Strengthening Older Retail Areas and Managing the Location of New Retail**

New retail development has also increased significantly over the last four years from about \$30 million in 2002 to about \$100 million in 2006. This has provided convenience for many residents. But it may also be taking its toll on some older business districts that are declining in the face of competition from this new retail development. In the future, Raleigh will need to balance the focus on new development with an equal focus on revitalizing older commercial areas so that older areas of the City are also served by high-quality and convenient retail services.

## **Focusing on Clean Industries**

Like other regions of the country, the Triangle's overall manufacturing base is declining due to global industrial trends. Wake County's strongest manufacturing sectors include computers and electronics, electrical equipment and appliances, pharmaceuticals, fabricated metal products, printing, and food manufacturing. The challenge will be to maintain existing industries, focus on job training and education for those who need to retrain for new industry jobs, and to continue to foster "clean" industries such as those locating on the North Carolina State University's Centennial Campus.

## **Promoting Economic Equity**

The City's diverse job base is strong in education, health and social services; professional, scientific, management, and administrative jobs; retail trade; public administration; construction; and finance, insurance and real estate. However, not all areas of the City have participated fully in the City's employment and retail expansion, leaving some communities underserved. In addition, overall unemployment is low but many working residents in low paying jobs are not enjoying the fruits of the expanding economy. Public improvement strategies need to benefit all portions of the City and help to create competitive environments and opportunities for economic prosperity.

## **Broadening Transportation Options**

In Raleigh, most commuters rely on the automobile to get to work: approximately 80 percent drive alone and some 13 percent carpool. A very small percentage walk, bike or use transit. The Comprehensive Plan will need to address how Raleigh can encourage land use patterns to support transit use and increase the supply of housing in close proximity to employment centers, so the City becomes more energy efficient, has less pollution, and provides opportunities to reduce commute times.

## **Protecting Historic Resources**

The City of Raleigh has a unique heritage. Its cultural resources illuminate the economic eras, styles of development, and ways of life from more than two centuries of growth. In stark contrast to this rich history, much of Raleigh's built environment is new — almost 95 percent of the City's housing was built after 1950, and of that 65 percent was built after 1980. Therefore, promoting awareness of Raleigh's history, preserving historic resources, promoting a distinct sense of place, and ensuring compatible design within historic neighborhoods and landscapes is even more important.

## **Improving Air Quality**

Air pollution is a regional, national, and international issue. Raleigh will need to continue to do its part to improve air quality, because it does not meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's standard for ground-level ozone. One strategy is to provide alternatives to the automobile for a portion of daily trips — transit, walking, and biking — and to provide opportunities for people to combine car trips through mixing uses within communities and developments.

### Managing Our Water Resources

Water is now one of the key issues for many communities including Raleigh. With its present supply constraints, Falls Lake cannot solely provide for the future water supply needs of the City and the other Wake municipalities served by the City's water. The City will need to develop alternative water supplies, as well as conservation techniques. Ultimately, the City and its residents will need to use limited water resources more wisely.

Many people are concerned about water supply, but wastewater treatment is also a concern. The Neuse River will not be capable of accommodating all the City's future wastewater management needs. The City will need to develop alternative management options, such as: conserving and minimizing water use, reclaiming water for irrigation purposes, and optimizing and expanding current treatment capacity as technology improves.

### Expanding our Parks and Open Space

Raleigh has a well developed park and greenway system. Building on this success, the City will need to provide new parks and preserve additional open spaces, special landscapes, and natural resource areas for its growing population in the future.

### Challenges & Opportunities Ahead

Overall, Raleigh has many positive attributes to build upon to increase its livability and improve the prosperity of its residents. Raleigh continues to attract new residents and businesses from other areas of the country. This growth has brought the City economic prosperity but also threatens to overwhelm the resources, quality of life, and sense of place that have been hallmarks of the community. The City has a highly educated population and many higher education institutions.

As part of its updated Comprehensive Plan, Raleigh will need to address the challenges ahead: managing where and how growth occurs; balancing that growth with infrastructure; protecting and enhancing natural resources; implementing green and sustainable building practices; focusing on growing successful neighborhoods; expanding affordable housing, defining a transit future by coordinating land use and transportation; and increasing cooperation within the region

### Raleigh's Vision for 2030

Based on the existing issues, trends and challenges, Raleigh needs to set its course and move boldly ahead to be able to achieve its goals for the future. The Vision below expresses where we want to be and should be by the year 2030.

#### Raleigh Vision for 2030

*Raleigh will be a city that cultivates innovation and creativity that expands the City's competitive advantages and reputation. Raleigh will embody environmental conservation, energy efficiency, and sustainable development. Raleigh will be a great place to live with distinctive and attractive neighborhoods, plentiful parks and green spaces, outstanding educational opportunities, and a vibrant downtown.*



## **Vision Themes**

Our vision is reinforced by six key themes: Economic Prosperity and Equity; Expanding Housing Choices; Managing Our Growth; Coordinating Land Use and Transportation; Greenprint Raleigh – Sustainable Development; and Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities.

### **Economic Prosperity and Equity**

Raleigh will embrace innovation, education and creativity and value diversity and equity so that there is a high quality of life for all residents. All areas of the City and its residents will prosper from the City's economic expansion. Raleigh will be nationally known for its cluster of high-tech research and development firms based on cooperative relationships between local universities, government, and private firms. Raleigh's skilled labor force will attract businesses that take advantage of the highly educated and technically oriented residents, which in turn will continue to fuel the development of quality residential and employment opportunities. Expanded educational and training programs will provide the opportunity for all of Raleigh's population to participate in the expanding economy. We will also embrace diverse creative economic sectors, and our city will be enlivened with nationally-regarded arts groups, performance spaces, and residents employed in creative occupations that will enhance our economy, community and the quality of our lives.

### **Expanding Housing Choices**

Raleigh will have an expanded supply of affordable and workforce housing options that provide housing opportunities for all segments of our population. This expanded supply of decent affordable housing will provide stability for families, improve opportunities for education and career advancement, and reduce homelessness for low and moderate income households.

### **Managing Our Growth**

Raleigh will foster quality growth through more integrated land uses, alternative transportation modes, green building technologies and development practices, and open space and resource conservation. We will manage growth and provide desirable places to live and work while also cooperating with other jurisdictions in the region. Adequate infrastructure will be planned and in place as development comes on line.

### **Coordinating Land Use and Transportation**

Raleigh will coordinate its transportation investments with desired land use patterns to plan more effectively for housing, employment and retail uses, and for public services. Higher density residential and mixed use development will provide the land use pattern needed to support successful new local and regional public transit services. We will also have additional bicycle and pedestrian paths and roadways that better serve us all.

### **Greenprint Raleigh—Sustainable Development**

Raleigh will be nationally recognized as a model green city. Environmental sustainability and stewardship—the protection and wise use of resources for existing residents and future generations—will be institutionalized. Individuals, institutions, businesses and government will work together and enhance the natural environment through policies, decisions, and investments. The City will significantly improve its environmental policy framework and land management practices; acquire sensitive lands; and preserve water, air and lands resources.

### **Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities**

Growth and new development will be accommodated within Raleigh through creative solutions that conserve our unique neighborhoods while allowing for growth and expand our local businesses. The City will have healthy and safe older neighborhoods that are conserved and enhanced through careful infill development that complements existing character and responds to natural features. Newly developed areas will be diverse walkable neighborhoods and provide access to open space, community services, retail, and employment.

### **Development of the Vision**

Public outreach and dialogue is a central component of the comprehensive planning process. The Department of City Planning, lead agency for the update of Raleigh's Comprehensive Plan is providing a wide variety of civic engagement opportunities and forums throughout the city and the planning process. These include public workshops, smaller scale community meetings, stakeholder roundtables, and opportunities for on-line consultation. The centerpiece of the civic engagement effort is a series of nine citywide public workshops held in three rounds of three meetings.

The first set of these meetings were held in November 2007. "Vision" and "Values" were the focus on these workshops. These workshops were publicized widely in the local news media including print, radio, and television as well as through the city's web site. More than 330 people participated in the workshops and this turnout for all the meetings was at or near capacity.

A draft vision statement was presented at the workshops in November and was preceded by a brief presentation that included an overview of existing conditions and an assessment of the State of the City today. After the presentation, participants worked in facilitated small groups to explore what they heard in the presentation and their reactions to the draft vision and the State of the City description. Each table discussion was staffed by a facilitator and a note taker. Comments were also recorded on a brief questionnaire to record participants comments about what might be missing from the vision and what challenges they thought were most important and needed to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Department of City Planning read carefully through all the responses and comments for recurring themes, areas of agreement, and areas of contention. All of this input was used to revise the Vision for Raleigh and to help shape the next stages of the Comprehensive Plan update.

While much of the participants' comments affirmed key parts of the draft Vision Statement, it was clear that revisions were necessary to fully address the comments and input received at the workshops. There was a strong sense that the Vision when revised needed to place a stronger emphasis on social equity questions such as jobs and wages, integrated communities, and affordable housing. The three themes of the draft Vision (Balanced Growth, Greenprint Raleigh, and Innovation, Education and Creativity) were well-received on the whole. Clarity on what exactly is meant by "balanced growth" is needed as it seemed to mean different things to different people. Participants stated that affordable housing, expanding transportation choices, and addressing growth management should be addressed and included in the Vision for Raleigh. Consequently, the original three vision themes have been supplemented with three additional themes.

### **Next Steps**

Raleigh's Vision for 2030 will be used to set the frame for the updated Comprehensive Plan. After the Vision is completed, the planning process will begin to focus on the development of the plan's goals, preliminary policies and associated maps. The process is expected to take a number of months with a draft plan available to the public in the fall of 2008 and anticipated adoption in early 2009.